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in quantity into the colonial possessions and received the praise that is reserved for an efficient and well-oiled machine. But a movement was already incubating which was to change the whole attitude towards the Chinese of Europeans and indigenous peoples alike. The birth of Chinese nationalism coincided with the numbers of the Chinese emigrants reaching a new high level.

Sun Yat-sen in his *Three Principles of the People* said (as Mazzini had said long before him) that 'nationalism must precede internationalism'. Continuing the passage on race already quoted in part earlier in this chapter he went on:

> But the Chinese have no national spirit; they only know the family and clan groups. Thus China is only a loose sheet of sand. Our position is extremely perilous—if we do not promote nationalism and weld together our four hundred million into a nation, we face a tragedy—the loss of our country and the destruction of our race.[1]

This warning was taken very much to heart by Young China, though the process towards national consciousness had already gone a long way before Sun Yat-sen crystallized the sentiment in these words. The effect of the intense nationalist campaign coupled with an education drive was to make the Chinese everywhere conscious of their separateness as a race and nation, and, in Southeast Asia, to render the peoples among whom they lived aware that they regarded themselves as a race and nation apart. Almost simultaneously the seed of nationalism had been sown in the hearts of the other races and they were beginning to feel that they, in their turn, faced a tragedy—unless they, too, promoted nationalism and welded themselves into a nation, they might suffer the loss of their country and the destruction of their race.

The simultaneous growth of two such sentiments within one country meant that the communities grew nationalistic spines which when they were erected pricked their neighbours painfully. It was like Schopenhauer's definition of human beings as 'hedgehogs nestling together for warmth'. And the 'warmth' they sought in common (if such a metaphor can properly be used of countries sweltering in intense tropical heat) was the livelihood that Southeast Asia had, so far, abundantly afforded. But with large-scale immigration came competition, and the growth of economic rivalry between the races was coincident with the growth of nationalism.

[1] Lecture 1.

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In the course of this survey have been quoted numerous opinions on the merits or demerits of the Chinese as colonists in Southeast Asia. Many of these views have been highly critical and unfavourable. Yet they are more than offset in the minds of those of us who feel this bias by the recollection of tributes paid to the community by persons well qualified to make them—as, for example, the European ex-internee whom the writer met in Syme Road internment camp, Singapore, at the time of the Japanese surrender and who exclaimed to him, 'After this I shall *swear* by the Chinese.' (He referred to the many acts of kindness rendered by the Chinese to internees, to persons escaping from the Japanese, and others at the risk of their lives.) Again the writer, at the very moment that this paragraph was written, received a letter from an administrator of long standing in North Borneo in which he declared that 'the Chinese of North Borneo are, generally speaking, the salt of the earth'. Apart from enthusiastic tributes of this kind there are many just appreciations of the value of this people in the writings and reports of past administrators. Francis Light, the founder of Penang, said, 'The Chinese constitute the most valuable part of our inhabitants'; John Crawfurd regarded them as 'an intelligent, active, and commercial people'; Raja James Brooke of Sarawak said, 'Without the Chinese we can do nothing'; the Superintendent of the 1931 Census of North Borneo exclaims jubilantly in his report, 'the one bright spot . . . is the increase that is still shown in the numbers of the Chinese who can fairly be regarded as the mainstay of the commercial and industrial population'. And these examples could be greatly multiplied.

But the fact remains that a great deal of criticism has been levelled against the Chinese by persons, mostly Europeans, which can be boiled down to a few specific charges. The Chinese, it is alleged, are 'greedy', 'materialistic', 'parasitic', 'unconscionably usurious and profiteering', 'have a stranglehold on retail trade', 'have built up a wall against the admission of natives to their trade monopolies', 'form combinations obstructive to government', and 'create enclaves of Chinese nationalism within the countries they inhabit'.

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Let us consider whether these charges have any weight.

The Chinese in the Nanyang have never been in political control; they have therefore never had any political responsibility. The laws have been made by others. They have merely performed the functions the Governments have allowed them to perform.

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Sometimes they have been given a choice of activities. The Spanish, for example, wanted them as peasant agriculturists but tolerated them as traders. Similarly, in Indochina the French wanted them for opening up uncultivated lands, but, since the 'Red Lands' suitable for the cultivation of rubber and other profitable raw materials were barred to all aliens, the Chinese (although he might have been a peasant at home) refused the hard toil of the fields if he could obtain a position with a Chinese firm. In Java the Dutch found the Chinese useful as middlemen, and middlemen they became, accepting the penalty of the resentment of the Javanese that such a function entailed. The farming of the revenue was allotted to them as the highest bidders by the Spanish, the Dutch, and the British alike. Such occupations are labelled 'parasitic', but it must be remembered that they were the best methods of obtaining revenue available before the Governments felt themselves able to collect it for themselves. When they could do so, the farms were abolished. Also, it should be remembered, it was from the Chinese themselves that most of the revenue of the farms was collected. If we accept Mr Furnivall's epithet of 'parasitic' we must extend it to cover the British, Dutch, and French Governments also.

Given a large and improvident peasantry, as existed in Siam, Indonesia, Indochina, and the Philippines, there was a demand for credit with uncertain security or none at all. This credit was most naturally extended by the traders to whom they sold their produce, and it was most conveniently given in the form of goods and paid for in produce at the time of the harvest. Certainly this gave great power to the Chinese trader; the question is whether he abused it. A survey in Siam by Mr James M. Andrews (see p. 164) does not bear out the widespread belief that the Chinese are unconscionable usurers. 'The Thai farmer [says Mr Andrews], and especially his wife, is much more given to money-lending with the hope of high profits than the Chinese.' As regards alleged profiteering in the rice trade, the College of Agriculture at Los Baños in the Philippines (see p. 635) conducted a survey and found that 'the Chinese merchants are performing essential marketing services at a fairly low cost'. In Indonesia it is notorious that many Indonesian Hajis and Arabs are far greedier money-lenders than are the Chinese. In Malaya it is the chetty and the Sikh who are the money-lenders; not the Chinese. Cases in which Chinese

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figured as lenders were practically unknown.[1] The charge of 'unconscionable usury and profiteering' is, in the writer's opinion, not proved.

Professor Raymond Firth has gone into the question of Chinese middlemen in the Malayan fishing industry with considerable care. He says that in this role the Chinese performs important functions. He shoulders a great part of the market risks; he supplies considerable capital, in a liquid form, in consumer's goods, or in producer's goods; and he saves the fishermen much trouble in seeking buyers. On the other hand the same observer adds:

> The system obviously has great dangers. It gives him a monopoly, with little prospect of the fishermen reaping the advantages of the rising market, or of even getting much more than bare subsistence earnings, and it tends very often to place them firmly in his debt, with little chance of extricating themselves and building up their own capital.

Among the Malay fishermen this relationship with the Chinese is variously viewed. One group told Professor Firth that they liked it 'because they can get hold of cash easily'. In several other places, however, the fishermen complained of the low prices they received from the Chinese to whom they were bound to sell. Up to 1939 the attempt of the administration to meet the situation by encouraging co-operative Malay associations for fish-marketing had had only a moderate success.[2]

It should be added that the provision of credit on reasonable terms for productive enterprise is finally the responsibility of the Governments. Much progress has been made in some Southeast Asian countries in the establishment of landbanks, co-operative societies, &c., in the last half-century, but these advanced money only for 'productive' purposes, and in Indonesia the people have still to go to money-lenders to obtain money for wedding, funeral,

[1] A London solicitor who was for many years in Malaya, where he had a large practice, remarked to the writer on 10 February 1949, 'I have never known a money-lending Chinese.' Nor can the writer himself, who had considerable experience as a magistrate and as official assignee and liquidator of companies, recollect any such case.

The writer, on the other hand, has known Britons (of presumed respectability) lending money to Indian chetties at a minimum of 12–15 per cent., who in turn lent it to Malays, Chinese, and others at a rate of interest that can only be guessed!

[2] *Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy*, pp. 14, 61.

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and other expenditure demanded by custom. Moreover, the money-lenders are willing to advance money without the security demanded by landbanks and co-operative societies.

In the matter of trade monopoly it is true that in Siam, Indo-china, Indonesia, and the Philippines the Chinese have a virtual monopoly of the rice distribution and milling trades. The Govern-ments of these countries have, to meet the popular agitation, passed legislation to restrict the Chinese share in this trade. The fact that the Chinese maintains his position in face of all this legislation and in face of competition, fair or unfair, is simply because he is so much more competent in the business. Florence Horn (see p. 634) points out that the Filipino politician who charged the Chinese with having half the retail business in their hands changed his ground completely when the reply was made that all the Filipino had to do was to open up a *tienda* on his own and put the Chinese out of business. He then said that the Chinese standard of living was deplorably low, he eats almost nothing and works day and night; therefore he subjects the Filipino to unfair com-petition! At the same time it must be admitted that the Chinese, having obtained virtual control of some trades, do their best to keep them in their hands and usually employ only their own countrymen. This is naturally galling to the native looking for an opening, but there is a sound business reason for it. They employ their own people because they are, on the whole, better at the job. No European merchant would maintain that a firm should be compelled to employ persons of inferior business capacity, thus exposing the firm to the danger of bankruptcy.

If the Governments of Southeast Asia wish to secure a greater share of the trade of their country for their nationals, they are entitled to legislate accordingly—provided, of course, that the law does not operate harshly or unjustly by depriving an alien of one source of livelihood before he has had a chance of acquiring another. (The economic effect on a country of discriminating against aliens who discharge some useful function is another matter.)

In *Fanny's First Play* Bernard Shaw pokes fun at the critics who will not give an opinion as to the merits of the play until they know 'Who wrote it?' The inference is that such a question is an irrelevance, and that the play should be judged on its own merits. But while we have, so far, attempted to consider the charges

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made against the Chinese 'on their own merits', we do not regard it as at all an irrelevant question to ask 'Who made them?' Apart from a late King of Siam, the persons who have taken it on themselves to indict the Chinese for their alleged shortcomings are nearly all Europeans. Some are administrators, or ex-administrators with even more settled prejudices, some are merchants (though these tend, through greater contact with and therefore greater knowledge of the Chinese, to be fairer to them than the first-named), and some (including the most vitriolic) are mere tourists. The author would say that he has never encountered a European qualified by an adequate knowledge of the language and customs of the Chinese and by long experience of them who delivered himself of downright judgements or sweeping condemnation of that race. Indeed knowledge of the Chinese almost invariably induces a sympathy for them and their difficulties, however much it may be tempered by momentary exasperation or by realization of some personal or collective shortcoming. A reason for the anti-Chinese bias is often that the speaker has identified himself completely with some native race afraid of the Chinese and thus he shares and intensifies the natives' fears and resentments. Another common reason, no doubt, for the charges is that the vices ascribed to the Chinese—shrewdness, foresight, business acumen, keeping one's own counsel—are counted as virtues in the City of London, in Amsterdam, Paris, or New York, and that the indictment of the Chinese race is unconsciously inspired by fear of successful competition.

But when all these counts are disposed of there remain two which, on the face of them, are much more plausible and which deserve careful scrutiny. One is the charge of 'forming combinations obstructive to government' and of 'creating enclaves of Chinese nationalism in the countries they inhabit'.

There is no doubt that the Chinese have a strong protective clannishness which has kept them intact as a community. This in the past, however, did no particular harm to the communities around them and indeed insulated the latter from Chinese internal conflicts. Moreover their intermarriage with the native population meant that the absorption of their descendants into the native community was only a matter of time. But with the advent of Nationalism the position began to change rapidly. An almost physical wall began to raise itself between the Chinese and the native community.

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native community. The Chinese National Government manifested an increasing solicitude for the *Hua Ch'iao*, the overseas Chinese, whom it regards almost as its children; it instructed its consular officials to register all the Chinese within their jurisdiction, and they sent missions to inspect every activity of overseas Chinese life. What is more, the Chinese Government took upon itself to direct the education of Chinese in the Nanyang, laying down the curriculum to be followed, and even introducing a system of grants-in-aid in competition with that of the local Government. It often happened that remote officials in Nanking or Chungking, very likely originating from one of the northern provinces and completely out of touch and sympathy with the Chinese of the Nanyang, claimed the right to direct their affairs. Even ethnically speaking the overseas Chinese might be nearer to the Siamese or Burmese, or (by intermarriage) to the Indonesians, than to a Chinese from Honam or Kansu. It was no wonder that Siam, Malaya, and the other countries of Southeast Asia saw an *imperium in imperio* growing up in their midst and began to fear for their own eventual safety.

This development, then, we are constrained to regard as in many ways a misfortune for the overseas Chinese and for the countries in which they had made their home or wherein they were sojourners. It arrested assimilation and erected a racial wall. At the same time the simultaneous growth of local nationalism encouraged the Chinese to look to their own country for protection—a protection, it turned out, it was, because of its own internal division and weakness as a Power, in no position to give. Nor did the authorities in the one country of Southeast Asia where the Chinese now were the majority community offer any real encouragement to the local-born Chinese to regard Malaya as their own country and to resist the claims to control their destinies by a remote Government in a country they had never seen. The chance to extend the teaching of English to the community was lost and for thousands the only means of receiving an education of any sort was in the Chinese Nationalist schools; the doors of the Malayan civil service were opened to Malays but not to Chinese; the whole policy of Federated and Unfederated Malay States was, and is still, pro-Malay. It was surely no wonder that the Malayan-born Chinese who, while proud of their Chinese ancestry and culture, wished to identify themselves and their

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children's future with Malaya alone, were attracted to, or forced into, the Nationalist camp.

Malaya has for long been the 'test case' of Chinese affairs and a focus of interest in Southeast Asia. The situation as it was tending was very clearly described by a distinguished traveller many years ago; Professor Arnold Toynbee records the impression of his visit to the Straits Settlements in these words:

> And China is not only enormous already; it is rapidly getting more enormous (if logically that adjective can be put in the comparative degree). When I touched at the Straits Settlements on my way out east I realized that British Malaya is destined, by 'peaceful penetration', to become a Chinese province, and I fancy, from what I have heard, that the same destiny may be in store for Burma, Siam, French Indo-China, Dutch Indonesia, and the Philippines. In the end the current of Chinese expansion in the Tropics will meet the current of Hindu expansion over the submerged heads of the smaller and weaker and less efficient peoples in between, who are already fast going under. And, after what has happened, I surmise that the new frontier between China and India will tend, slowly but surely, to travel westward at India's expense and in China's favour.

What happened in Malaya, we cannot too frequently remind ourselves, was not the result of military conquest, not the territorial spoils of a Kublai Khan, but because the British had welcomed the immigration of a couple of million Chinese. For long after the intervention in the Malay States it had been found difficult to attract the British capital needed for the opening up of the country: it was not until a plentiful supply first of Indian and then of Chinese labour was assured that such capital was forthcoming, and it was not until the end of the 1920s that there was any control at all of Chinese immigration.

The British Colonial Office and the Malayan Governments must have seen that the admission of Chinese in such numbers that they would eventually be the majority community was bound to create a problem of tremendous magnitude. Even the degree of assimilation taking place in Siam and Indochina was out of the question because of the barrier of the Mohammedan religion. The only hope now for the future of Malaya in the interest of its diverse peoples was to promote a feeling of common Malayan citizenship to counter the claim, tacit or express, of Chinese Nationalism to consider Malaya as a new province of China. In the pre-war years

called the "Great Tradition" in an agrarian society.[13]

The links between country and city in this basically feudal relationship were clear, consecutive, and relatively simple to define. To be sure, the villager would regard the capital as a different world from his own, but it was nevertheless a largely comprehensible world, if associated with abstractions and refinements beyond his immediate ken.[14] The modern great city of Southeast Asia, however, not only was different but was also incomprehensible to the child of the folk society, who came to regard it not merely as strange and foreign but also as hostile. The "foreignness" is reflected in their ethnic composition. Until the second World War at least the largest population group in Rangoon was Indian; Singapore is primarily a Chinese city; Bangkok is very largely Chinese, as is Saigon if Cholon, its twin city, is included; both Manila and Jakarta have large foreign and Chinese elements. To this extent the great city is more metropolitan than national. Each has its Chinese, European, and native quarters, for example, although in many instances the lines of division have become blurred, especially since the close of the war.[15] Furthermore, wherever Chinese populations are large, a predominant type of house is the so-called "shophouse," a two-or-more-story building with shops on the first floor, built to a standard width originally dictated by the length of the average fir-log lintel as used in South China, and with residential flats and

[13] See Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, "A Cultural Role of Cities," a working paper for the Conference on the Role of Cities in Economic Growth and Cultural Change, University of Chicago, May 24–26, 1954.

[14] Cf. J. M. van der Kroef, "The Indonesian City: Its Culture and Evolution," *Asia*, March, 1953.

[15] In Singapore the Chinese are localised according to the various so-called "clans," e.g., Hokkien, Cantonese, Tiuchiu, Hailams, and Hakka (see B. W. Hodder, "Racial Groupings in Singapore," *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*, October, 1953).

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427 But the alien planta-
565 tions and even alien smallholders have threatened to grasp at it, and the
177 advances of Western medicine, so beneficial in many ways, have only accelerated the rate of increase of the population which has to seek a livelihood from it. In most parts of South East Asia the peasant is the actual owner of the land he tills, often legally under some agreement with
426 the State. But his rights to the produce are often severely limited by a heavy burden of indebtedness. The real effects of this may be less than people sometimes think, because when the debts are spread among neighbours and kinsfolk interest may be waived, repayment is sometimes protracted or ignored, and the debt may be serviced by other than material means. But there is no doubt that the peasant producer is badly hampered by his debt load. It is most pressing when debt is contracted to a member of an alien ethnic group, an Indian or a Chinese, for whom the transaction is a purely commercial one.

563 The role of alien Asiatic ethnic groups is one of the most significant
565 features in the economic and political life of the peasantry of South East
177 Asia today. For many centuries, Indian and Chinese trading influences
178 have met in the South East Asian region, and Indian religious concepts
439 have penetrated deep into many of its social systems. But for more than four hundred years the dominant commercial and political note has tended to be sounded by Europeans. Now the balance is altering. Colonialism may have set the modern structure of South East Asian society, but the patterns will persist when the colonial Powers have withdrawn. To this new society the Chinese above all have the economic key. In Indo-China, Siam, Malaya, the Philippines, and Java, the Chinese have penetrated the economic system and taken over crucial functions. They have shared in much of the wholesale import trade, they have attained pre-eminence in retailing vital imported goods to the peasant, and they act as middlemen for the collection, storage, and processing of peasant export products. As part of this process they often finance the peasant producer by advances on his crop, gaining a double profit by giving part of these advances in goods, not cash. The Chinese achievement has been remarkable. They have been kept on the margin both of the peasant society with which they deal, and of the European society with which at a later stage their growing wealth would allow them to associate. Though lacking any formal political power, which in the Orient as elsewhere is so often the passport to success, they have built up a trading structure of extraordinary toughness, elasticity, and elaboration.

565 The wider political implications of this are not my concern here. But
609 it is important to note three points in connexion with the peasant theme.
186 One is the xenophobic reaction of the local urban dwellers and of peasants
● 578 too, which has periodically found expression against the Chinese, as traders or residents in South East Asia, in the form of riots and other disturbances.
563 Another is the reaction of the Chinese, whose economic strength has given
241 them confidence, and who are now prepared to stand by their claim to a

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real stake in the countries of the Nan Yang, as settled members of the local society, and not as aliens. The third point is that the Chinese community has never been one of middlemen only; there has always been a fair proportion of cultivators within it. The poor peasantry of South East Asia now includes a Chinese as well as an indigenous element. The 1947 census of Malaya shows 45,000 Chinese engaged in rice growing, and another 100,000 in market gardening and fishing, essentially peasant pursuits.

The pressure to which the South East Asian peasant has been subjected by the combination of Western and other alien influences has been severe. But we must beware lest we misinterpret it. In a recent book which gives a comparative analysis of the agrarian situation in the countries of South East Asia, appears a striking statement about Malaya—that development of mining and rubber industries has pushed the native Malay population more and more towards the east, into the areas of the former Unfederated Malay States: 'The Malays', it is said, 'considered the east as safe from Western penetration, and therefore preferred this undeveloped area to the irrigated lands on the western coast, mainly because there they could get only temporary land licences, since a complete survey of all potential tin-bearing regions had not yet been made'.[1]

It is true that the eastern States are predominantly Malay in population, and that the greater part of the vast immigrant population of Malaya is densely settled on the western side of the peninsula, where the resources are richer and access easier than on the eastern side. It is also true that there has been some lack of enthusiasm among Malay peasants to colonize the new Government-developed irrigation areas, for complex reasons, including lack of capital in the past, and disinclination to move from their ancestral homes. But it is quite incorrect to put these facts together and to argue that the Malay has been pushed by alien pressure over from the west to the east of the peninsula. Apart from some seasonal movement for rice harvesting or fishing, the internal migration of Malays is inconsiderable, despite the rapid development of communications in recent years. Both the 1931 and the 1947 census show that whatever movement takes place—well under 10 per cent—is almost wholly from one State to another, either on the west coast or on the east coast, or to Singapore. Hardly any movement at all occurs from the west to the east. Moreover, the 1947 census shows that between 1931 and 1947 the Malay population of the western States increased by about one-third, at a rate slightly higher than that of the eastern States. The proportion of Malays in these western States, in terms of the total population of all ethnic groups, also increased slightly during this period, due primarily to the decline of Indians and Indonesians. In other words, though foreign economic penetration has immersed the western Malay in a flood of alien elements, it has not driven him away. On the contrary, he has preferred to stay and await events.

[1] Erich H. Jacoby, *Agrarian Unrest in Southeast Asia* (New York, Colombia University Press, 1949) p. 113.

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nearing the end of its historical phase. How far it is likely to be replaced by a more insidious form of satellitism is not relevant here. But to talk about political emancipation of South East Asia being the prime requirement for the solution of the problems of the peasantry must not obscure the economic factors involved. Nor is fresh capital all that is needed. For the economy of the peasant to attain a relative stability a great development of technical and administrative skills in the commercial field is necessary. The building of a native professional class would seem to be an important element in the construction of a more integrated economic and political system. To concentrate attention on the political factors alone is to overlook the fact that most of the sinews of the economic organism are now provided by the one group which does not have overt political power—the Chinese.

What remains of the traditional class structure in South East Asian society is not of much avail as a defence of the peasant from alien exploitation. In any case, though the rulers and traditional nobility still command much respect, and provide symbols for the unity of the people, there are stirrings of resentment among the people against the perpetuation of a system in which these aristocrats do not perform recognizable services at commensurate incomes. But such resentment does not mean that the peasantry are dry tinder for the spark of Communism to set alight. Communism as yet does not seem to have any great attraction for the mass of the local peasantry of the South East Asian region. The lack of popular response to the Malayan insurrection has shown this. It is presumably true to say that the interest of the peasant can always be secured in any movement which promises to give him greater control of the land—more land more secure tenure, freedom from land debt, and better returns for his produce. But to most of the Indonesian peasants these aims are likely to be sought in nationalism, which can be largely given both an ethnic base and the religious sanctions of Islam. The person to whom the cry for a solution of the land problem is likely to make a most definite appeal, especially in Malaya, is not the Indonesian but the Chinese peasant, who sees himself as excluded from full participation in the land rights of the country folk. Over and over again one hears the cry, ill-founded as it is, that the Chinese have not been allowed to grow rice in Malaya.

Here may well come one of the acute pressure points in the South East Asian scene. The analysis might go as follows. Nationalism is a powerful political force because of its appeal to the individual in a projected, enlarged form of his desires and strivings. But by itself it is an aggressive rather than a constructive force. It lacks a coherent theory for the use of the resources at its control. An ideology containing such theory, and an equally ardent emotional charge on the part of many of its adherents, is provided by Communism. If Communism can work through nationalism it has a most powerful combination. Yet Communism in South East Asia lacks organization of any scale. The optimum conditions for its success are